

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2022

Ms. Mary Erickson  
Acting Director  
National Weather Service  
1325 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Acting Director Erickson,

We are greatly concerned over the numerous reported delays in the dissemination of public tornado warnings during the recent storms that hit Iowa and resulted in the tragic loss of seven lives.

As you are aware, on March 5, 2022, several tornadoes swept across Iowa, causing devastating property damage and loss of life. One of these tornadoes touched down in Madison County, Iowa, and traveled nearly 70 miles with wind speeds reaching up to 170 miles per hour. This tornado reached EF-4 classification – the strongest in Iowa in nearly a decade and the deadliest since 2008.

As information on the destruction from these storms continues to come to light, it was reported that the National Weather Service's (NWS) public notifications of tornadoes in the area had been delayed, in some cases for as long as seven minutes. This was credited to a technical issue in the NWS Dallas-Fort Worth office.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Iowans lacked the necessary time to prepare for the approaching storm.

Unfortunately, severe weather is common in Iowa, and our constituents rely on the NWS to provide prompt and accurate weather alerts to know when to seek shelter and take other potentially life-saving precautions. Delays of even just minutes can be the difference between life and death.

This is not the first time that the NWS has malfunctioned during severe weather events. There have been several reports of delays, including the inability to communicate over NWS Chat when severe weather strikes. We cannot allow Iowans to be in danger because of technical problems that continue to go unaddressed.

Every minute counts for saving lives, preventing injury, and mitigating property damage when severe weather strikes. As storms become increasingly unpredictable, quick and accurate weather alerts become even more critical. Delays in public notifications of severe weather are unacceptable and addressing them should be the highest priority.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/06/nws-tornado-warning-dissemination-iowa/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axioslocal\\_desmoines&stream=top](https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/06/nws-tornado-warning-dissemination-iowa/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axioslocal_desmoines&stream=top)

As such, we request information regarding the issues NWS encountered with its tornado warnings system during these storms, and specific steps the NWS intends to take to fix these issues going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Cindy Axne", positioned above a horizontal line.

Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ashley Hinson", positioned above a horizontal line.

Ashley Hinson  
Member of Congress